



## Interim Guidance for Winter Holiday Gatherings (December 21, 2021)

COVID-19 cases are currently rising in North Carolina due to the Delta variant. The highly contagious variant, Omicron, is beginning to spread rapidly and is expected to cause the highest rates of COVID-19 infections of the pandemic in the coming weeks. The Omicron variant is two to three times as contagious the Delta variant, making it four to six times as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus. With the holidays approaching and people gathering, it is critical and urgent to act now to protect yourselves and your family and friends. Vaccinating and boosting against COVID-19 remain the most effective ways for people to protect themselves from serious illness, hospitalization and death. Early evidence shows that boosters provide a significant level of protection against Omicron.

### This Winter and Holiday Season

- **Vaccinate and Boost:** Get vaccinated now, including a COVID-19 booster as soon as you are eligible. This is particularly critical for those over age 65, those with underlying medical conditions and healthcare workers. The Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are the best choice for most people. Layer protection by getting a flu shot
- **Test:** Get a COVID-19 test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household and before and after traveling, regardless of your vaccine status. Get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Mask:** Wear a mask indoors in public, even if you are vaccinated.

### Holiday Travel

- ☐ Get tested 1-2 days before and 3-5 days after traveling, and be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including boosters and against flu.
- ☐ Do not travel if you are not fully vaccinated and boosted. If you do travel and are not fully vaccinated and boosted, in addition to testing, stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if you test negative.
- ☐ Everyone should follow CDC's guidance for [travel during COVID-19](#) and NCDHHS's guidance for [public transportation](#).

## Gathering During the Holidays

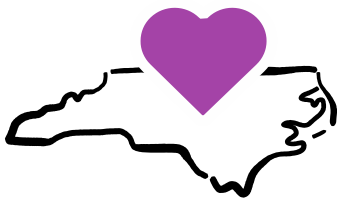
Attending outdoor or virtual events presents a lower risk for spreading COVID-19 than events that are in-person and indoors. Consider avoiding large in-person social gatherings.

### If you do gather:

- ☐ Get vaccinated, including a [COVID-19 booster](#) when eligible and a flu shot. NCDHHS strongly recommends that hosts direct their guests and family members to [Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot](#) and require them to get vaccinated before the event.
  - For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our [Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19](#) and [Recommendations for Protecting Each Other](#).
  - COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time as other vaccines, including the flu vaccine.
- ☐ Get tested 1-2 days before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household.
- ☐ Guests who are not fully vaccinated should wear a face covering and maintain physical distance from others, especially when they are indoors.
- ☐ Guests who are fully vaccinated should also wear a mask in all indoor public spaces if the gathering is in a county with high or substantial levels of transmission, as [defined by the CDC](#).
- ☐ Keep gatherings small and host gatherings outdoors, when possible.
  - If gathering indoors, use a space that is large enough to allow for physical distancing and consider limiting the number of attendees.
  - Increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors. For more information see, CDC 's guidance on [Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#).
- ☐ Everyone, regardless of vaccine status, should get tested before gathering.
  - For information on self-testing, see CDC's [Self Testing guidance](#).
- ☐ If you are sick or have symptoms, do not host or attend a gathering. Get tested.
- ☐ If you do get sick, seek treatment. More information on treatment is available at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/treatment>.
- ☐ For tips on general food safety, follow CDC's guidance for [Food Safety for the Holidays](#).

### For safer holiday celebrations consider:

- ☐ Enjoying meals with individuals in your household only.
- ☐ Practicing religious holiday customs at home.
- ☐ Preparing and delivering a meal to a neighbor.
- ☐ Watching religious and cultural performances virtually or outdoors.
- ☐ Attending religious ceremonies or holiday events virtually or outdoors.



**#StayStrongNC**

**Staying apart brings us together.  
Protect your family and neighbors.**

**Learn more at [nc.gov/covid19](https://nc.gov/covid19).**



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